

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 2, 2023

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Zach Luse, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Diana Duffy
Jake Pipp
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Jude Nuru
Clair Oursler
Kenneth Swymer
Beth Campbell
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate (voting)
Charles Redfern, Alternate (voting)
Dr. Rowland Russell, Alternative

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Peter Hansel
Councilor Bryan Lake

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Zach Luse called the meeting to order at 8:12 AM. Ms. Lisa Maxfield and Mr. Charles Redfern were invited to participate as voting members.

2) Approval of Minutes- June 28, 2023

Chair Luse opened it up for any discussion and corrections to the minutes. With no corrections or edits, Chair Luse asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Jake Pipp motioned to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Ken Swymer. The June 28, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved.

3) ECC Work Group Report Outs

A) Community Solar

Mr. Jude Nuru said that in his workgroup, they had discussed the series of stakeholder sessions held by the New Hampshire Department of Energy for the energy efficiency and conservation

block grant. He questioned whether it is the responsibility of the grant subgroup to be monitoring that or his group since it relates to their work and there seems to be some overlap. Mr. Luse responded that all the workgroups will have some amount of overlap which provides an opportunity to work together and suggested at least keeping both groups informed on what they are doing/watching.

B) Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships

Dr. Rowland Russell wanted to offer a few corrections. In reference to the previous report out and the reference to Antioch, he wanted to clarify that is not a grant; it is a graduate fellowship. As such, it would be filled by a graduate student at Antioch.

The second is to clarify that in suggesting the Antioch fellowship, he was not trying to infer that it needs to have anything to do with food security. He just happens to be chair at that committee, but the position itself would be whatever the city and this committee needs that position to be. He noted that food security has plenty of Antioch support because of the community garden connections.

Mr. Charles Redfern wanted to make the group aware of the Volkswagen grant, which he stated the City had also been informed of. Chair Luse asked the workgroup whether the Volkswagen grant was the same settlement grant for the electric chargers that the Coop is using or if it was different. It was thought to be the same, but confirmation would be obtained. Mr. Luse believed that the application period for that ended and that the Coop was one of the grantees for that. Ms. Mari Brunner shared that the Volkswagen had an initial round that was for the DC fast chargers. They do have a round open currently for replacing diesel vehicles but believed it to be a smaller sum of money. She believed the due date to be towards the end of September or October. Chair Luse thanked Ms. Brunner.

Mr. Redfern stated it seemed reasonable to ask the city if they intend to apply to that. Chair Luse said it would be a good question for the guest today.

C) Education and Outreach

Chair Luse noted that there are tentative dates set for the Keene Energy Week for October 21-28th. It was intentionally overlapped with the Pumpkin Festival to try and attract a wider audience.

D) Legislative Tracking

There were no updates to add to the report-out provided in the packet.

E) Food Security

There were no updates to add to the report-out provided in the pack

4) City of Keene Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan- Don Lussier, City Engineer

Chair Luse introduced Don Lussier, City Engineer. Mr. Lussier shared that the city staff is working on and are just kicking off a contract with a consultant for an Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Planning project. It is a relatively small effort, and the goal is to help them, as staff, figure out what they are doing. He continued that collectively, they all recognize that the time for EVs is coming, but they “know enough to know that we don’t know enough in terms of what we need to be doing to support it”.

He explained that the contract is small and will last about three months. The city has provided the consultants with many of the documents that the city has produced in terms of policies and different goals that the City Council has regarding reduction of fossil fuels, etc. The consultants will be using that along with performing some background research to determine what the demand is for EV infrastructure planning. Over the next three to five years, this project will determine what they need to do now to prepare for the future.

A significant portion of the project is assessing the city fleet and evaluating all the city vehicles in terms of fuel usage, mileage, annual mileage, etc. to make the business case for which of those vehicles should be electrified and identifying what the best way to implement that is. Along with that will be determining how to build the infrastructure to support the fleet. The consultants will also help to determine whether these changes should occur all at once or over time as the vehicles are up for replacement.

In addition, the consultants will be looking at city properties and places where citizens are going to need EV support such as public parks, parks and recreation facilities and determining the demand for EV in those locations. A much smaller piece of this effort will be determining the EV infrastructure within the public right of way.

Mr. Lussier explained that there two different types of parking within the city: parking lots and parking within a laid out public roadway. Each have different legal status and are regulated differently in terms of time, cost, etc. He believes over the next three to five years, much of the public infrastructure will not be invested in those right of way parking spaces because they tend to be short-term parking spaces. He believes it makes more sense to support those short-term spaces with fast charging EV infrastructure, which unfortunately is very expensive, and he does not see that to be the best bang for the buck over the next 3-5 years.

Mr. Lussier presented an ask to the committee regarding the demand/analysis needs of the project. He explained that this project has a low budget and as such, they do not have the funds for the consultant to come to town to hold public meetings or do the public engagements as done

previously with other projects. While these are a great way to get public input, they are also time and resource intensive resulting in increased cost, which is not in this project budget. As a result, they are looking at lower cost virtual ways such as using social media, emailed surveys, or other methods of engagement. His hope was to “pick the brain” of the committee about low-cost engagement methods that this committee has access to that could help them get the information out and get survey information back to help inform the project.

Chair Luse thanked Mr. Lussier. Chair Luse said while he realizes that it is way too expensive to put fast chargers on Main Street now, he does foresee a time in which there is going to be a need, especially if the city progresses to mostly electric vehicles. He asked if that was being considered in the downtown infrastructure plan of putting conduit or something like that in.

Mr. Lussier responded that it is being heavily considered and discussed. He went on to explain that they do not have an answer yet, but what would make the most sense in the downtown area would be the DC fast chargers. Unfortunately, most of the physical infrastructure needed to support those are obtrusive. It would take up significant sidewalk space and he does not think right now that the community would be in support of the giant transformers that would be necessary sitting on Main Street. They are, however, looking at this project to “future-proof” knowing that eventually the equipment is going to get smaller as advances continue, and that the technology will get less expensive. The goal is to determine how to accommodate this in the future when the technology is better, and the demand is higher.

Chair Luse clarified that he was more interested in the future proofing piece.

Ms. Beth Campbell shared that prior to coming to New Hampshire, she was in Portland, Oregon. She explained that Portland has a large budget to work with as they are the leaders of renewable energy. They had a few public solar charging stations that drummed up a lot of interest, both in solar and electric. She wanted to throw it out there as a wish list project for future collaboration or demonstration project that would be solar/EV charging.

Mr. Lussier explained that both he and Kurt Blomquist (City of Keene Public Works Director) have interest in this area. He explained that there is solar charging equipment that might be more compatible with the public right of way. It is, of course, expensive, and as such, it will not be something that the city would do immediately. It is something that is being investigated and could solve a lot of the electrical backbone challenges that the city must put into place to support EV charging.

Chair Luse recognized Ms. Diana Duffy. Ms. Duffy was looking for clarification on what Mr. Lussier’s ask was around the surveys.

Mr. Lussier responded that at the current time, he cannot determine how many chargers are justified on city property, what type they should be or where they should be located. All these questions are demand driven questions and his ask is around obtaining help reaching the public

and getting answers to those questions through whatever social media outlets necessary. He knows there is a lot of talent and interested people on this committee and thought the committee might have some ideas about ways that the city could solicit input from the public to get the information to inform the project on where to go as they move forward.

Ms. Duffy asked a question about the project timing and the deadline for getting public input.

Mr. Lussier responded that since it is a three-month project, he anticipates they will be done with it late fall/early winter and they will do the demand analysis in about a month.

Ms. Duffy followed up asking what that means for the deadline to get public input.

Mr. Lussier explained that they will start gathering information in about a month and they will probably spend a month gathering and then another month dissecting and writing it up.

Ms. Campbell asked what the budget is for gathering the information. Mr. Lussier responded that he has zero dollars to spend.

Chair Luse recognized Dr. Rowland Russell, who asked if Mr. Lussier could say a little bit more about the demand analysis and questioned whether he would be checking with dealerships in the area on sales numbers of electric vehicles or if there was any kind of registration that they would have available? He said he believed projecting demand was also a very important part and suggested looking at what other communities have done as well as the national trends. He said he enjoyed digging up and doing research like this so he would start looking at what he can find. Mr. Lussier explained he was hoping to get more granular local information with regards to how many people in the city of Keene are planning to buy an EV in the next five years.

Dr. Russell asked if any other towns or cities in the region have data and Mr. Lussier explained that they had not investigated that.

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod stated he believed that the committee would be helpful, especially if there is some flexibility on when the data comes in. He stated he was happy to post a link, but recommended they include a question of what city and state commenters live in, as posts can get comments from people all over the world. He added that while the worldwide comments and information is interesting, it needs to be able to be filtered down and offered to help with that. He noted that the political season has started, and councilors are going to be going door to door. If there was a link with the city survey on that, the councilors could potentially distribute it for the project and assist with providing continuous information.

Chair Luse said getting the registration data would be useful for how many people own EV's and plug-in hybrids in Keene, but based on what he has seen, there are a lot of EV's that are not registered in Keene or are from out of state. He thinks it would be good to ask something like "are you planning or considering buying an EV in the next x years". He feels the demand for the City of Keene is more external right now.

Mr. Lussier explained that they have started talking with the tax collectors and clerk's office about how to extract that data from their database and IT is helping with that. They will be at least able to know what is registered within the city, but that will not help with other towns. Chair Luse said Ms. Brunner could help and explained that she has familiarity with the state database organized by city.

Chair Luse recognized Nora Hanke, Monadnock Sustainability Hub, who said she wanted to encourage considering a "if we build it, they will come" mentality. She said there are a lot of people in multi-unit housing who are waiting for chargers to come into the park next door to them as they cannot charge it at their rental unit. It is not just a question of who is planning to buy a car, but who is waiting for there to be a charger so they can buy a car.

Chair Luse added that he thought the winter parking ban is also an issue. Many of the downtown buildings have no parking and tenants must jump from city parking lot to city parking lot.

Dr. Russell asked if Mr. Lussier had considered using Flash Vote, a program that City Manager Dragon has been pioneering. Mr. Lussier explained that yes, they will most likely be using it, but he knew nothing about the program itself. Mr. Russell encouraged everyone in the group to register for it and noted that it does include other towns, county and state information and breakdown as well.

Councilor Ormerod suggested asking what contingencies and what barriers the community are seeing to purchasing an EV and if those barriers are removed, whether that would change their decision.

Mr. Paul Roth asked if the consultant had a canned survey or if they were going to customize it to the City of Keene and whether they have worked on other towns in New England. Mr. Lussier explained that they will customize the survey to the City of Keene. He further explained that the consultants are out of Boston so most of their work has been in that area and he did not believe there is any other New Hampshire towns in their list.

Ms. Brunner asked if the Energy week was too late to try and get input for this project. Mr. Lussier said he would like to hear more about what is happening during the event but did not think that would be too late.

Chair Luse said he thought if they were to do a survey and use the City's wider email list to get feedback, they could also use Community Development's social media and it would reach a wider range of people. He said the committee could use their connections with the Clean Energy Team and other groups in the area to disseminate it and get it out to the audience.

Ms. Campbell asked if there was any data that could be mined from Eversource. Ms. Brunner stated she has been trying to get other data from them for over six months and was not confident that would be a fruitful effort.

Mr. Roth asked when the three-month clock started to which Mr. Lussier explained that it will have either a September or October start. Mr. Roth went on to ask whether the consultants would have the resources to do something like Keene Energy week. Mr. Lussier explained that it would not be in their scope, but that they likely could investigate city staff or volunteers from the committee or something along those lines assisting.

Ms. Campbell asked if there would be a printed card or a QR code that would be put at the DMV for people waiting to use. She thought they could take the survey while they are waiting, and being that they are at the DMV, they are likely already thinking about cars.

Mr. Clair Oursler questioned whether they had considered the source of the batteries for these electric vehicles. He shared he had recently learned from a book called Cobalt Red, that most of it is a toxic metal called cobalt. He went on to share that most of the cobalt (41%) comes from the Congo. He believed that while it is good to get away from fossil fuels, the problem lies with how to dispose of these batteries and toxic chemicals when they have reached their functional lifespan. He suggested members look at the long-term effects of cobalt.

Chair Luse said he believes they have gotten far better at recycling car batteries.

Ms. Duffy, going back to data collection, said if late October is a possibility, Pumpkin Fest might be a possibility and she would be happy to poll people. Ms. Brunner shared that obtaining a booth at Pumpkin Fest is likely to be challenging due to the organizers doing venter selection through a raffle process and limiting the number of vendors, making it highly competitive. Councilor Ormerod asked if there were parking areas for the festival and said if so, those parking areas might be a good intercept location. Ms. Brunner offered to investigate it and report back.

Chair Luse thanked Mr. Lussier for coming.

- 5) **Keene Energy Week- Tentative Dates: October 21–28**
- 6) **Community Power Program Update**

Chair Luse asked Ms. Brunner if she had a Community Power update to which she said she did not have much to update on since last month. They have not sent out another enrollment report, but she should be getting that around mid-month. She will forward that on to the committee once received and hopefully, they will have new numbers to discuss in September. She explained that the four towns that participated met to review the launch and see how it went. The consultants projected the amount of money residents would save over the first eight-month period and it was a significant number. They will be working on getting that information up on the website to allow citizens to see it.

The consultants also updated them on how the process will work when people move, which would require that people set up an Eversource account. By default, they would be on the utility supply. When Eversource does a quarterly sweep, they would receive a letter with the opt out card and they could then choose to opt out. Otherwise, they will automatically be opted in. She brings this up because someone moving into Keene might be on the default rate for up to three months depending on their move in date before being brought into the program. If, however, they proactively set up their Eversource account, then the next day, they can go online and join the program thereby reducing the time on the default supply from up to three months to one month. She thought this might be an opportunity for communication and marketing the program.

Mr. Jude Nuru asked a clarifying question about moving to which Ms. Brunner explained that the Eversource account is connected to the physical meter at the physical address. Even if one was to move from one location in Keene to another, they would still have to go through the opt out process, or if they want to get into the program faster, they could proactively join. If they do not opt out, they will be brought into the program automatically.

Dr. Russell suggested that one way to reach the new residents and people who move is to work with the realtors as he knows there are several of them who put together packets for incoming residents.

Chair Luse welcomed Nora Hanke to the microphone. She suggested the same outreach could be performed at opening days at the various universities.

Mr. Ousler wondered if anyone had collected or looked at the data around the number of people living in subsidized housing. They may not have to pay electricity, but many still have a car.

7) **Fall Retreat Planning**

Chair Luse asked for thoughts on timing for the afternoon retreat and wondered what people thought of doing it during energy week.

Mr. Redfern suggested changing the venue to Stonewall Farm. Chair Luse said he would be happy to consider it if they were willing to waive the fee.

Ms. Duffy asked how much time the retreat would take. Ms. Brunner explained they typically do two hours, but the feedback has always been that two hours has been short. The challenge has been that scheduling is difficult with larger time blocks.

Chair Luse said he has done quite a few retreats and always felt rushed at the end. He was open to doing three hours.

Councilor Ormerod asked for clarification on the reasoning and goals of the second retreat. Chair Luse explained that the plan is to revisit the goals as there was feedback showing a strong desire to do another given how much participants said they gained from it. He explained the regular

meetings are more structured and there often is not time to bring all the work groups and all their information together to really discuss the issues in the detail that can be done at the retreat.

Chair Luse asked if people were open to three hours, to which people agreed.

Since only four people had responded to Ms. Brunner's doodle poll, Chair Luse asked people to respond.

Ms. Lisa Maxfield said the tentative plan was for soup and requested crockpots.

- 8) **Committee Membership**
- 9) **New Business**

No new business was raised or discussed.

- 10) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 6, 2023- 8:00AM**
- 11) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 9:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner